

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A method comprising:
 - receiving, by a vending machine and from a customer, a request for a product to be dispensed by the vending machine, in which the request indicates a first product;
 - providing, by the vending machine, a plurality of selectable menu options, each of which defines at least one customer service issue;
 - receiving, by the vending machine and from the customer, a selection of at least one of the menu options, thereby defining an indication of a customer service issue;
 - determining, by the vending machine, whether to provide a resolution to the customer service issue; and
 - providing, by the vending machine and to the customer, an offer for a second product that is not the first product.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, in which providing an offer comprises:
 - providing an offer for one of
 - the second product, and
 - a refund.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, in which providing an offer for the second product comprises:
 - determining that a sales velocity of the second product is less than a threshold.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, in which determining whether to provide a resolution to the customer service issue comprises:
 - determining whether to provide a resolution to the customer service issue based on sales velocity of the second product.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - determining that the first product is unable to be dispensed from the vending machine; and

- disabling the ability to request the first product.
6. (Previously presented) A method comprising:
receiving, by a vending machine and from a customer, a request for a product to be dispensed by the vending machine, in which the request indicates a first product;
determining, by the vending machine, that the vending machine has malfunctioned;
providing, by the vending machine, a plurality of selectable menu options, each of which defines at least one customer service issue;
receiving, by the vending machine and from the customer, a selection of at least one of the menu options, thereby defining an indication of a customer service issue;
determining, by the vending machine, that a sales velocity of a second product is less than a threshold; and
determining, by the vending machine, whether to provide a resolution to the customer service issue based on the sales velocity; and
providing, by the vending machine and to the customer, a compensation code that is redeemable for the second product.
7. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
receiving, via a customer interface of a vending machine and from a customer, a request for a product to be dispensed from the vending machine;
receiving input at the vending machine and from the customer;
determining, by the vending machine and based on the input received at the vending machine and from the customer, that a customer service issue exists;
determining, by the vending machine and based on a coin inventory available at the vending machine, whether to provide a resolution to the customer service issue; and
providing, by the vending machine and in the case that it is determined that the resolution should be provided based on the coin inventory available at the vending machine, the resolution to the customer.
8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[8]] 7, wherein the receiving of the input from the customer, comprises:

providing, via the customer interface of the vending machine, a plurality of selectable menu options, each of which defines at least one customer service issue; and receiving, via the customer interface of the vending machine and from the customer, a selection of at least one of the menu options.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the providing of the plurality of selectable menu options, comprises:

determining, by at least one sensor of the vending machine, diagnostic data of the vending machine; and defining, based on the diagnostic data, the plurality of selectable menu options.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, in which the determining that the customer service issue exists is further based on a determining, by the vending machine, that the vending machine has malfunctioned.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, in which the malfunction comprises the vending machine dispensing the wrong product.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, in which the malfunction comprises a failure of the vending machine to perform one or more of: (i) a playing of a movie trailer; (ii) a playing of a game; (iii) a rendering of a game result; and (iv) a playing of an audio file.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, in which the malfunction comprises the vending machine not having processed payment correctly.

15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 14, in which the malfunction comprises the vending machine not having properly credited payment that is tendered by the customer.
16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 14, in which the malfunction comprises the vending machine not having properly dispensed payment that is due to the customer.
17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising:
 - selecting, by the vending machine and based on the coin inventory available at the vending machine, the resolution from a plurality of available resolutions.
18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, further comprising:
 - prompting, by the vending machine, the customer to verify information regarding the vending machine malfunction; and
 - receiving, via the customer interface of the vending machine and from the customer, a response to the prompt.
19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, in which the providing of the resolution to the vending machine customer comprises at least one of:
 - a reservation of a product in a vending machine on behalf of the customer
 - providing the customer with money via the vending machine;
 - establishing a credit balance at the vending machine;
 - applying credit toward a customer account of the customer;
 - providing a compensation code to the customer;
 - providing to the customer a voucher that is redeemable for a benefit from the vending machine;
 - providing to the customer a voucher that is redeemable for a benefit from another vending machine; and
 - providing to the customer a voucher that is redeemable for a product from a retail store.

20. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, in which the providing of the resolution comprises providing an offer for a second product other than the first product indicated by the request.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the determining of whether to provide the resolution comprises:

determining that the customer service issue is due to the customer not following instructions; and

determining, based on the determination that the customer service issue is due to the customer not following directions, not to provide the resolution.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising:

receiving the input from the customer via a microphone of the vending machine; and

recording audio input received via the microphone.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising:

determining that the customer service issue comprises a jammed dispensing row of the vending machine.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the resolution comprises altering, by the vending machine, a product display window to impede view of the products stored in the jammed row by the customer.

25. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising:

recording data associated with the customer service issue; and
determining a unique identifier for the customer service issue.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

determining the resolution further based on the recorded data; and

- communicating an indication of the determined resolution to the customer.
27. (Previously presented) The method of claim 25, further comprising:
receiving, via the customer interface of the vending machine and from the customer, information which identifies the customer.
28. (Original) The method of claim 25, further comprising:
outputting, to the customer, the unique identifier.
29. (Previously presented) The method of claim 25, in which outputting, to the customer, the unique identifier comprises:
displaying an alphanumeric code indicative of a malfunction of the vending machine that caused the customer service issue.
30. (Previously presented) The method of claim 25, in which the recording data associated with the customer service issue comprises:
determining diagnostic data of the vending machine, wherein the diagnostic data comprises at least one digital image of at least one vending machine component; and
recording the diagnostic data.
31. (Previously presented) A vending machine, comprising:
a processor; and
a memory in communication with the processor, the memory storing instructions that when executed by the processor cause the vending machine to:
receive, from a wireless handheld customer device operated by a customer of the vending machine, an indication of a customer service issue at the vending machine;
select one of a plurality of available remedies to provide to the customer; and
provide, to the customer, a compensation code indicative of the selected remedy.

32. (Previously presented) The vending machine of claim 31, further comprising:
a printer that provides the compensation code via a printed voucher.
33. (Previously presented) The vending machine of claim 32, wherein the printed voucher comprises a barcode indicative of the compensation code.
34. (Previously presented) The vending machine of claim 31, wherein the compensation code is provided by transmitting an indication of the compensation code to the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine.
35. (Previously presented) The vending machine of claim 34, wherein the transmitting is conducted via one or more of: (i) electronic mail; (ii) text messaging; and (iii) infrared radiation.
36. (Previously presented) The vending machine of claim 31, wherein the instructions, when executed by the processor, further cause the vending machine to:
receive, from the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine, an indication of the compensation code; and
provide, in response to a receipt of the indication of the compensation code from the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine, the remedy to the customer.
37. (Previously presented) The vending machine of claim 36, wherein the receiving of the indication of the compensation code from the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine, comprises one or more of:
(i) reading information indicative of the compensation code from a display screen of the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine;
(ii) detecting a DTMF signal transmitted by a speaker of the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine, wherein the DTMF signal is indicative of the compensation code; and

(iii) receiving a wireless signal from the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine, wherein the wireless signal is indicative of the compensation code.

38. (Previously presented) The vending machine of claim 31, wherein the wireless handheld customer device operated by the customer of the vending machine comprises one or more of: (i) a cellular telephone; (ii) a PDA device; (iii) a pager; (iv) a personal music player; (v) a gaming device; and (vi) a personal computer.

39. (Currently amended) A method of providing real-time customer service at a vending machine, comprising:

identifying, by the vending machine, a transaction at the vending machine, wherein the identifying comprises:

receiving, by the vending machine, an indication of a request from a customer to purchase a unit of a product sold via the vending machine; and

receiving, by the vending machine, an indication of a payment by the customer for the requested unit of product;

receiving, by the vending machine and after at least one of the receiving of the indication of the request for the unit of product and the receiving of the indication of the payment for the requested unit of product, an indication of a malfunction of the vending machine that has occurred with respect to the identified transaction;

establishing, by the vending machine and in response to the receiving of the indication of the malfunction, a communication link between the vending machine and a remote customer service device operated by a customer service representative;

transmitting, by the vending machine and after the establishing of the communication link, information provided by the customer, to the remote customer service device operated by the customer service representative;

receiving, by the vending machine and from the remote customer service device operated by the customer service representative, and in response to the transmitting of the information provided by the customer, an instruction to output a resolution to the customer.

wherein the resolution is based on at least one of: (i) an identity of the customer, and (ii) an assessed value of the customer; and outputting, by the vending machine and in response to the receiving of the instruction to output the resolution to the customer, the instructed resolution to the customer.

40. (Previously presented) The method of claim 39, further comprising:
transmitting, by the vending machine and after the establishing of the communication link, diagnostic data of the vending machine to the remote customer service device operated by the customer service representative.
41. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40, wherein the resolution is based on the diagnostic data transmitted by the vending machine to the remote customer service device operated by the customer service representative.
42. (Previously presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the resolution is based on the information provided by the customer and transmitted by the vending machine to the remote customer service device operated by the customer service representative.
43. (Cancelled)
44. (New) The method of claim 40, wherein the resolution is determined automatically by the remote customer service device operated by the customer service representative based on the information provided by the customer, the diagnostic data and at least one stored rule for determining the resolution.

45. (New) The method of claim 40,

wherein the diagnostic data includes an indication of whether there is a product jam at the vending machine, an indication of an average actual item velocity for other products in the same category, and an indication of the coin inventory of the vending machine, and

wherein the resolution is determined automatically by the remote customer service device operated by the customer service representative based on at least one stored rule for determining the resolution and:

- (i) whether there is a product jam at the vending machine,
- (ii) the indication of an average actual item velocity for other products in the same category, and
- (iii) the indication of the coin inventory of the vending machine.